

House Republican Press Release

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Reps Harkins, Miller; Sen. Debicella: Dem Deficit Plan Barely Dents Shortfall; Sets Stage for Major Tax Hikes



*Legislative Republicans Propose Deeper Spending Cuts;
Reducing legislators' Salaries by Five Percent*

The refusal by the majority Democrats who control the state legislature to consider more than token cuts in state spending in the face of a mounting budget deficit is setting the stage for major tax increases that could devastate middle class families in Stratford, Shelton and elsewhere in Connecticut, state Representatives John A. Harkins and Lawrence G. Miller, and state Senator Dan Debicella said Wednesday.

“The majority Democrats’ so-called ‘deficit mitigation plan,’ which actually includes hidden spending to the tune of \$250,000, fails to adequately address the state’s budget crisis,” said Representative Harkins, R-120th District, a Deputy House Republican Leader at Large. “With the budget shortfall threatening to top \$800 million to \$1 billion by the end of the current fiscal year and as much as \$6 billion over the next two years, to offer a deficit reduction package that includes more spending is dishonest to the people of Connecticut. Excessive state spending is one of the main reasons our state is bleeding red ink. The majority Democrats’ rejection of the proposals we made today to reduce state spending to bring down the deficit will make major tax increases to balance the budget almost inevitable.”

The legislative Republican proposals would have reduced the state’s budget shortfall by \$185 million, \$54 million more than the majority Democrats’ plan. The Democrat package also included \$250,000 in hidden spending that could further aggravate the state’s fiscal crisis, House Republican leaders said.

“Crippling tax increases in the middle of a recession will be the death knell for our state’s economy,” said Representative Miller, R-122nd District. “Middle class families and individuals throughout Connecticut already are struggling to make ends meet in an economic downturn that is worsening every day. If Democratic legislators continue to rebuff our efforts to eliminate the deficit through prudent spending reductions rather than tax hikes, it will broaden and deepen the recession and mean more business failures and higher unemployment. During past recessions, when the majority Democrats failed to cut spending and raised taxes to deal with deficits, it took much longer for Connecticut’s economy to recover than low tax states that kept spending under control. The proposal they approved today looks like déjà vu all over again.”

"Our legislature needs to start showing some leadership in cutting the deficit," said Senator Debicella, R-21st District. "Governor Rell and the legislative Republicans have been the only ones proposing cuts in spending. If we cannot come together in a bipartisan way to eliminate the \$350 million shortfall this year, how are we ever going to make the tough choices to close the \$6 billion deficit for the next two years?"

The Republican proposals would have:

- Delayed an \$87 million salary increase package for corrections officers until a budget is in place.
- Reduced legislators' salaries by five percent.
- Restored \$54 million in cuts Democrats eliminated from Governor Rell's budget.
- Delayed or eliminated expensive state mandates on towns such as in-school suspensions and treated dangerous juvenile offenders as adults, which police departments support.

Legislative Republicans voted against the Democrats' proposal because it failed to adequately address the excessive state spending that is driving the deficit higher almost every day, Representatives Harkins and Miller, and Senator Debicella said.